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Synopses of Important Articles.

CHRIST'S TREATMENT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. By JOHN P. PETERS, PH.D., D.D. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. XV, pp. 87-105.

Professor Peters carefully examines the passages in Matthew's gospel in which our Lord makes reference to the Old Testament, comparing them critically with parallel passages in the other gospels and with the Old Testament.

Let us briefly note some of the most important of them. The story of the temptations in Matthew 4 and Luke 4 shows that Christ's conception of the highest manifestation of God to man is entirely different from that of Exodus 19, and similar passages, in which the divine is exhibited in clouds, thunder, and outward manifestations of might and terror. Christ will not turn the stones to bread, nor cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple to be upborne by angels, nor make himself king of the nations. He thus flatly contradicts the current conception of God's highest manifestation of himself, which, according to Jesus, is in the perfection in man of the divine attributes of love and truth. Matt. 5 : 17, 18, does not justify the usual interpretation that every jot and tittle (or minutest part) of the words of the law were sacred and eternal, for our Lord expressly condemns some parts of the law, of a formal character, which contradict the moral law, the law of love. The moral law, and that only, is sacred and eternal. He condemns, in Matt. 5 : 31, the law of divorce found in Deut. 24 : 1 (*cf.* also Jer. 3 : 1), saying this was given because of the hardness of their hearts. He repeals also, in Matt. 5 : 38, 39 (*cf.* Luke 6 : 29), the *lex talionis*, a law by no means peculiar to the Hebrews, but found in actual practice among all ancient nations, and in written form in all of the early systems of law. He contradicts, in Matt. 5 : 43, the spirit of many passages, such as Deut. 23 : 6 and the imprecatory psalms, 69 and 109. In the passages, Matt. 15 : 11-14 and Mark 7 : 15-19, there is involved a rejection of the Old Testament law of clean and unclean. Here our Lord lays down the spiritual law of clean and unclean, and so demolishes the old formal law. Thus Deuteronomy 14, and Leviticus 11, both go by the board,

and the peculiar holiness of Daniel for not eating the food of the Chaldæans (Daniel 1) ceases to exist. This notion of clean and unclean was also one common to the Hebrews with the nations about them.

In Matt. 11:10, Luke 7:27, our Lord quotes Mal. 3:1 as a prophecy of John the Baptist, and virtually denies the literal truth of Mal. 4:5 concerning the coming of Elijah the prophet. Literally Malachi's prophecy was untrue, spiritually interpreted it was true. Next comes the famous passage about the sign of Jonah. A comparison of Matt. 12:38 ff. with Luke 11:29 ff. in the light of the connection of thought will show that Matt. 12:40 is not a part of the words of Christ but an explanatory addition by Matthew. This could be made clear in our day by using a modern device and bracketing this verse. So in Matt. 21:2 ff. (compared with Mark 11, and Luke 19) we find that the quotation of the fifth verse from Zech. 9:9 is an addition by Matthew. It is a peculiarity of Matthew's style to try to connect our Lord's words and acts with the Old Testament, as far as possible. Compare Matt. 23:35; 24:15 (Mark 13:14; Luke 21) as illustrations of the same effort. In Matt. 5:21 ff. it is necessary, according to our modern methods of writing, to supply some introductory phrase (similar to "it was said by them of old time") a second time before the words "whosoever shall say to his brother Raca," as this is not a part of Christ's words, but only an application of the sixth commandment made by the doctors of the law.

Our Lord regarded the Old Testament as containing a divine revelation, but he does not treat it as complete or perfect, nor does he treat the individual men through whom the revelation came as infallible, but, on the contrary, Professor Peters maintains, there are things in the Old Testament which are untrue, and teaching which is contrary to the absolute divine truth. He does not think it necessary to assume the *kenosis* theory, for the question of the limitation of our Lord's understanding as a man is not really involved in any of the critical questions with regard to his use of the Old Testament. When he refers to passages in the Old Testament under the name of Moses it was merely to identify the passage, just as we would refer to Shakespeare, without any committal in regard to authorship.

This article is very interesting and suggestive. But we ought to make a sharp distinction between Christ's treatment of the Old Testament itself and of the superfluous additions and erroneous interpretation of it by the Jewish doctors of the law.

Also between the judicial law of the Old Covenant, forbidding, for the most part, only outward deeds, as murder and adultery, and the perfect will of God (including the evil thought as well as the outward deed) taught so clearly by Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount, not as a national law, but for a spiritual community of believers. Neither does Christ condemn the ritual law in itself.¹ He observes the passover; his followers offer gifts at the altar (Matt. 5:23, 24); he directs the lepers to bring the offering commanded by Moses (Matt. 8:4; Luke 17:14); he does not find fault with a most scrupulous fulfilment of the law of tithes, but only condemns the omission of the weightier matters of the law, "judgment and mercy and faith" (Matt. 23:23); and he justifies his acts on the Sabbath by Old Testament analogies, as in keeping with the commands of the divine lawgiver (Matt. 12:3). But, like the prophets of old, he ranks love above sacrifice (Matt. 12:7; Mark 12:33; Hosea 6:6). Therefore it is not the law interpreted by Jewish theologians, but the law interpreted by the prophets (Matt. 5:17), whose supreme validity is asserted by Jesus.

WM. N. MEBANE.

¹ See WEISS's *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, Vol. I, pp. 109, 110. Also an article, "Jesus and the Jewish Law," by JOHN MACNAUGHTON, in the *Queen's Quarterly*, April 1897, pp. 241-256.